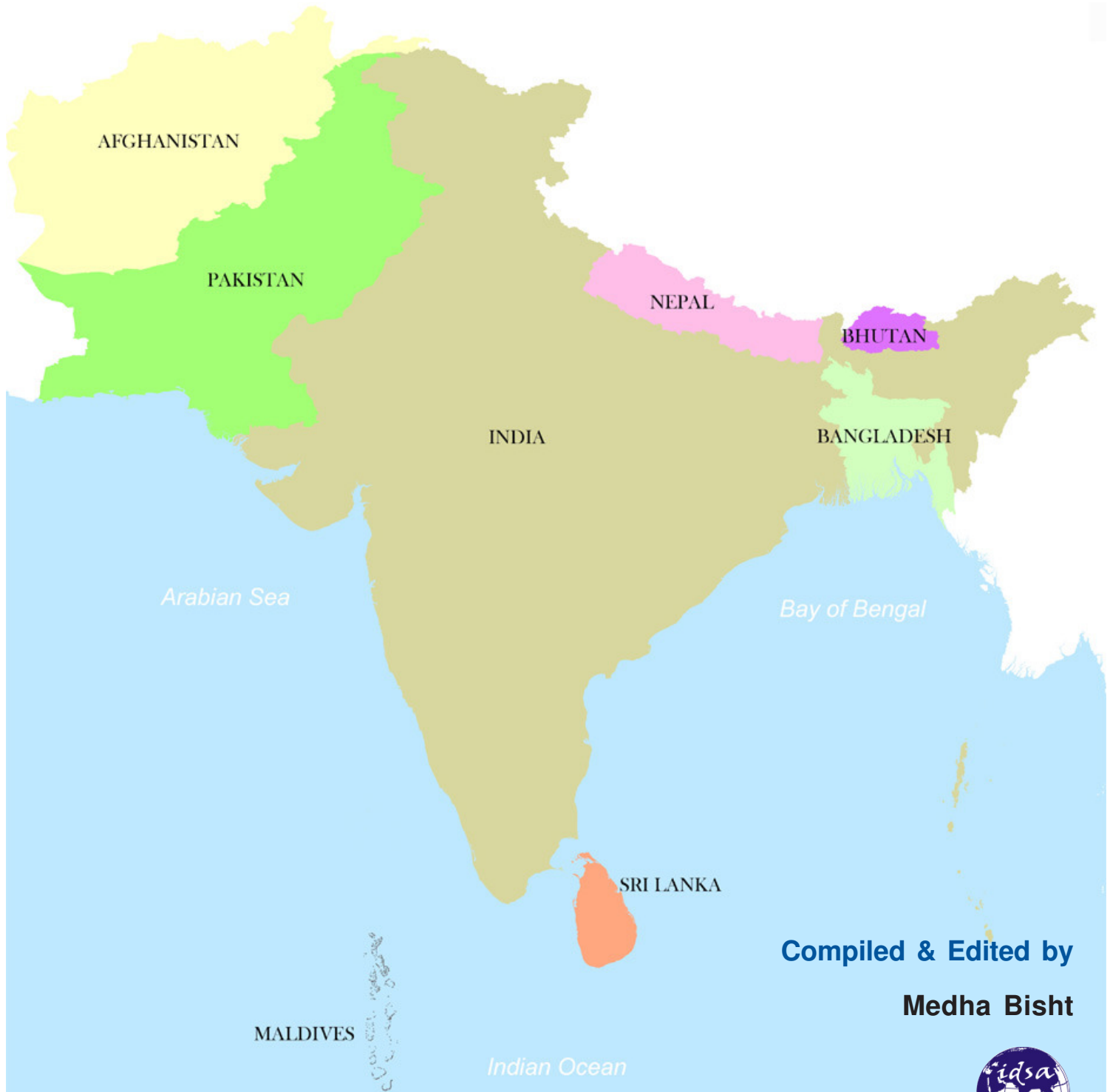


SOUTH ASIA TRENDS

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South Asia Trends is a fortnightly newsletter on South Asian affairs. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide a panoramic view of important events that shape and impact the politics of the subcontinent. The effort would be to inform our readers of the domestic, regional and international repercussions of the political debates and diplomatic engagements that take place in South Asia.



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Editor's Note

"The war is over". "Bin Laden is dead". These statements which are indicative of expediting the withdrawal process in Afghanistan have been an issue of some debate in the Capitol Hill. A recent news report published in The Telegraph (May 31, 2011) however suggests that there would be no significant withdrawals from Afghanistan.

While there has been a spike of internal attacks by TTP in Pakistan, the regional theatre in South Asia witnessed some diplomatic activity. Post Bin Laden's death, Indian premier Manmohan Singh paid a visit to Afghanistan, the outcome of which was a joint declaration. The bilateral relation between the two countries was defined as "strategic", and the two leaders were cautious in affirming that the relations between the two were not directed against any other state. United States meanwhile has called upon India, to play a constructive role Afghanistan. US State Department Spokesman Mark Toner highlighted India's economic rise, stating that it presents an "enormous opportunity" to Pakistan. Toner also said that the normalization of economic ties between India and Pakistan could be mutually beneficial and "more critically, a bilateral breakthrough could provide a catalyst for wider regional economic integration, a transformative goal we all wish to realize."

Senator Kerry's visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan was also a significant development in the past two weeks. Kerry was quoted in Afghanistan media, as stating that "the US does not want to sever its relations with Pakistan despite the fact that most of attacks in Afghanistan are launched from there." In his visit to Pakistan, Senator Kerry asserted that Pakistan could play a crucial role to decrease insurgency in Afghanistan stating that it requires persistent diplomacy "to convince the Pakistani military leaders that the real threat to their sovereignty comes not from its eastern border and not from across the Atlantic, but from the violent extremists within their own country" On engaging the Taliban, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has emphasized that the Taliban must renounce violence and abandon their alliance with al-Qaida.

Meanwhile Bhutan-Nepal trade talks were held on May 23-May 24, 2011 at Thimpu. The Joint Secretary level talks could help formalizing trade relations between both countries. Presently, Nepal enjoys trade surplus with Bhutan. Both countries have decided to establish a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

Amongst other developments, the Constituent Assembly (CA) term has been extended for three months in Nepal. The United Democratic Madhesi Front abstained from voting stating that the five point agreement consensually agreed by three political parties - Unified CPN (Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist), Nepali Congress (NC) and UML (Unified Marxist Leninist) did not adequately address the cause of the Madhes.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan to be US base for drone attacks in Pakistan

Times of India, May 1, 2011.

US is shifting its terror-killer drones from Pakistan to Afghanistan after Islamabad asked it to shut down UAV bases on its territory, but America has vowed to continue hitting militants in Pakistan's tribal areas. Pakistan has asked CIA to remove its personnel from the Shamsi airbase, about 350 kms southwest of Baluchistan's capital Quetta, where some of the drones are based, 'New York Times' reported quoting senior American officials.

(Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/Afghanistan-to-be-US-base-for-drone-attacks-in-Pakistan/articleshow/8131423.cms>)

Lieberman: Don't leave Afghanistan too quickly

USA Today, May 2, 2011.

As the nation absorbs the news that Osama bin Laden is dead, members of Congress are mindful that the war in Afghanistan continues. Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, said it would be wrong to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan too quickly. "I've already heard a few calls that we quickly withdraw from Afghanistan because the war is over, because bin Laden is dead," Lieberman said today. "I wish that we could say that but we would repeat a mistake that we made once before when we pulled out of Afghanistan ... after the Soviets did and that invited ultimately the Taliban and al-Qaeda into Afghanistan and from Afghanistan they attacked us on 9/11."

(Source: <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/onpolitics/post/2011/05/congress-osama-bin-laden-afghanistan-troop-withdrawal-1>)

Not an end to Af-Pak trouble

Hindustan Times, May 3, 2011.

Osama bin Laden's death was cheered by scores of Americans, but his demise is unlikely to mend the US administration's severely frayed ties with Islamabad or ease fierce fighting in Afghanistan. US President Barack Obama announced late on Sunday that the al Qaeda leader was shot to death in Abbottabad near Pakistan's capital, ending the United States decade-long quest to snare the man behind the September 11 attacks. Analysts and officials warned the United States was unlikely to see a swift end to its troubles in a region where American policy has, for the last decade, been driven by its fears of another such attack.

(Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Not-an-end-to-Af-Pak-trouble/Article1-692591.aspx>)

Afghan minister accuses Pakistani intelligence of supporting Bin-Ladin

Tolo TV, May 3, 2011.

The Afghan minister of interior has said the army and the intelligence of Pakistan supported the Al-Qa'idah leader in that country, saying the killing of Usamah Bin-Ladin proved that the main terrorist sanctuaries are beyond the borders of Afghanistan. In the meantime, the minister of national defence says, by the killing of Usamah Bin-Ladin, there will be no changes in the country in the short-term.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

India, Afghanistan issue joint declaration on security, terrorism

PTI, May 12, 2011.

Aiming to strengthen their cooperation in the areas of security and combating terrorism, India and Afghanistan Thursday elevated their bilateral ties to a strategic partnership, which they affirmed was not directed against any other state or group of states. After the “productive and constructive” discussions between Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Hamed Karzai which covered issues like terrorism, recent developments in the region especially last week’s killing of Al-Qa’idah chief Usamah Bin-Ladin in Abbottabad in Pakistan, both the leaders issued a joint declaration.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

India Can Play Constructive Role in Afghanistan: US

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 15, 2011.

The US has said India can play a constructive role Afghanistan and it will welcome New Delhi’s involvement in the war-torn nation. “India can play a constructive role in Afghanistan and in the region, and we would certainly welcome their involvement,” US state department spokesman Mark Toner told reporters at his daily news conference. India’s economic rise presents an “enormous opportunity” to Pakistan, and the normalization of economic ties could provide immense benefits to millions of entrepreneurs, farmers and businessmen in both countries, the official said.

“More critically, a bilateral breakthrough could provide a catalyst for wider regional economic integration, a transformative goal we all wish realized,” he added.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=526)

Karzai, Kerry Discuss Post-Osama Scenario

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 16, 2011.

President Hamid Karzai discussed with US senator John Kerry issues concerning the fight against terrorism, Afghan-US cooperation and efforts at bringing peace and stability to the country, the president’s office said on Sunday. The two leaders discussed in details the situation in Afghanistan and in the region. The proposed strategic cooperation agreement between Afghanistan and US and the post-Osama death situation in the region also came under discussion, it said. John Kerry on Saturday travelled to northern Balkh province, where he met the governor, Atta Mohammad Noor and other provincial officials. “The US does not want to sever its relations with Pakistan despite the fact that most of attacks in Afghanistan are launched from there,” he said. He said they wanted Pakistan to be a trustworthy friend in the war against terrorism. He said Pakistan had to respect the sovereignty of Afghanistan.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=537)

Al-Qaeda Divided Over Bin Laden Successor

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 19, 2011.

There is a huge difference of opinion within al-Qaeda network over the leadership of the network after the death of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, National Directorate of Security (NDS) said on Wednesday. Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) said that Ayman al-Zawahiri or Saif al-Adel are the two options to fill the leadership vacuum of al-Qaeda network, but Arab and Yemeni members of the network oppose the idea.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=584)

No Change in Red Line for Talks with Taliban: Clinton

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 19, 2011.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserted that there has been no dilution in the Red Line for peace talks with the Taliban, but hoped the death of Osama bin Laden would encourage its leaders to move towards reconciliation process. "We have outlined our red lines for the Taliban: They must renounce violence. They must abandon their alliance with al-Qaida, which it would certainly seem as would be an easier step for them to take now, post the death of bin Laden," Clinton told reporters at a joint media availability with the European Union High Representative for Foreign Policy, Catherine Ashton.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=583)

NATO Upgrades ANP Training

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 23, 2011.

NATO will extend the length of its police training course across Afghanistan from October as it takes aim at staggeringly low literacy rates and corruption among the force before all security is handed over to the Afghans by the end of 2014.

The NATO-led alliance has been training members of the 126,000 strong Afghan National Police since 2009. Afghan police had long been viewed as inept and lagging behind the training of the army, which was the focus of foreign instruction efforts since U.S.-backed Afghan forces toppled the Taliban in 2001.

The task has become even more important as western forces prepare to begin handing over security, a transition U.S. President Barack Obama says will start from July when he plans to begin a gradual drawdown of U.S. troops.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=629)

MPs Briefed on Economic Challenges

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 23, 2011.

There has been economic development in the country over the past few years, with poverty declining by six percent last year, a minister told Parliament on Sunday. Commerce and Industry Minister Anwarul Haq Ahadi, Minister of

Finance Dr. Omar Zakhilwal and Chamber of Commerce and Industries chief, Mohammad Qurban Haqjo, were summoned to the Wolesi Jirga to brief lawmakers on the economic situation and hurdles to development. Ahmadi, citing a survey conducted four years ago, said 42 percent of population was living under the poverty line. However, he added another survey conducted last year showed the ratio had declined to 36 percent.

A person who earns less than one US dollar a day was considered living under the poverty line, the minister said. "If the security situation improves, the required electricity is provided and land for new industrial parks acquired, the country's production and exports will increase..."

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=627)

Taliban Hiring Women Attacks: Gen. Blotz

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 24, 2011.

The Taliban are trying to convince women into carrying out suicide attacks in Afghanistan, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said on Monday.

On May 17, a combined Afghan and coalition security force killed four insurgents, including two armed women, during a security operation in Taloqan, the capital of northern Takhar province. The operation was conducted in pursuit of an Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan facilitator, who acquires, constructs and moves weapons and explosives throughout the province, the alliance said.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=647)

Pakistan Key to Diminishing Insurgency in Afghanistan: Kerry

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 25, 2011.

Pakistan could play a crucial role to decrease insurgency in Afghanistan, Senator John Kerry said during a hearing on regional security on Tuesday. While chairing a hearing to examine the current threat posed by al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan Senator John Kerry, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has said it requires a persistent diplomacy "to convince the Pakistani military leaders that the real threat to their sovereignty comes not from its eastern border and not from across the Atlantic, but from the violent extremists within their own country".

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=678)

Afghan Power Transition to Be Completed By 2014: Obama

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, May 25, 2011.

International forces in Afghanistan are 'preparing to turn a corner' towards transition and an eventual political settlement, US President Barack Obama said in London Wednesday. He and British Prime Minister David Cameron agreed on the importance of 'beginning the transition to an Afghan lead for security this year and completing that transition by 2014,' he said. However, both men stressed

that it was essential that any political settlement remained an Afghan-led process, and that the Taliban needed to break with al-Qaeda.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=677)

USA donates military aid to Afghanistan - minister

Afghan Ariana TV , May 28, 2011.

Afghan Defence Minister Maj-Gen Abdol Rahim Wardag has reported the USA has given 1,465m dollars in military aid to the Afghan government to provide Afghan security forces, especially the National Army, with military equipment. In addition, the said military assistance consists of new helicopters, aircraft and armoured vehicles. He thanked the United States of America [USA] for the assistance and described it as a significant step which helps the countrys forces to become self-sufficient.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

Taleban report explosion in military base in Ghazni in Afghan east

Afghan Taleban Voice of Jihad, May 29, 2011.

There has been a powerful explosion inside the enemy headquarters in Ghazni[Taleban spokesman] Zabihollah Mojahed: A powerful explosion has taken place inside the headquarters of the foreign and internal soldiers near the security command at the centre of Ghazni Province. The explosion took place at 0100 [local time] this morning, as a result of which the enemy suffered heavy casualties and material losses. According to the details, the explosion was carried out with the help of a police officer who had links with the mojahedin of the Islamic Emirate.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

Afghan daily condemns leaders for seeking peace with Taleban

Hasht-e Sobh, May 29, 2011.

While Mr Karzai's government and his so-called peace council are eagerly trying round the clock to restore the status and honour of the Taleban criminals and Pakistani mercenaries and telling lies about the Taleban's desire to align themselves with the government and people of Afghanistan, the terrorist Taleban and brutal pawns of the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) [of Pakistan] succeeded in martyring Commander of the Zone 303 Pamir, General Daud, and the Police Chief of that province [Takhar], General Shah Jahan Nuri. They also wounded a large number of officials who had gathered to attend a security meeting. The terrorists thus announced their readiness to join Mr Karzai's government and all those peace-lovers who are willing to make peace with sick sadists whom Mr Karzai has described as neither human beings nor Muslims.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

Nighttime raids to continue: Gen. Blotz

Pajhwok, May 30, 2011.

Despite President Hamid Karzai's orders for an immediate stop to nighttime raids, the NATO-led force said on Monday it would go ahead with the operations. On Sunday, Karzai issued a final warning to NATO-led troops over civilian deaths — hours after 14 non-combatants were killed in a new airstrike in southern Helmand province. The fatalities resulting from a raid in Nawzad district included women and children, said the governor's spokesman Daud Ahmadi. Governor Gulab Mangal, condemning the casualties, said a team had been set up to investigate the raid. In order to achieve our goals, we should continue with nighttime raids" ISAF spokesman Brig. Gen. Josef Blotz said at a joint press conference with NATO senior civilian representative's spokesman, Dominic Medley.

(Source: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2011/05/30/nighttime-raids-continue-gen-blotz>)

Afghanistan withdrawal: no significant pull out, says senior British general

The Telegraph, May 31, 2011.

General James Bucknall said Barack Obama's surge of reinforcements which arrived last year should stay for two more summer fighting seasons and warned of sending mixed signals to the insurgency with talk of withdrawal. Helmand, where British troops are stationed, was again likely to see some of the heaviest fighting this summer, he predicted. His comments in an interview with The Daily Telegraph come amid heated debate between generals and politicians in London and Washington over how quickly to hand over the war to Afghan forces. David Cameron announced this month that Britain would pull out 450 troops by the end of this year, after overruling defence chiefs who wanted a smaller cut.

(Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8545952/Afghanistan-withdrawal-no-significant-pull-out-says-senior-British-general.html>)

Bangladesh

Krishna's reshuffle raises hackles of MEA mandarins

Times of India, May 2, 2011.

It is unusual for foreign ministers to get into the business of moving key joint secretaries around. But S M Krishna has personally ordered a small musical chairs game in the foreign ministry by moving territorial heads handling important relationships for India, creating, for the first time, unhappiness and resentment in the venerable South Block. Springing a surprise on Friday, Krishna ordered T S Tirumurti, who looks after Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives and Sri Lanka, to be moved to the UNES division (where he will handle disasters in the neighbourhood, big ticket Indian economic diplomacy and millennium development goals). A R Ghanshyam, the current incumbent, will move to the Gulf division, Rajiv Chander will move from the Gulf division to SAARC temporarily before heading off to Ukraine. Tirumurti will be replaced by Harsh Vardhan Shringla, who is moving from the UN (political) division. The UN division will now be taken over by Pavan Kapoor who was heading the SAARC division.

(Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Krishnas-reshuffle-raises-hackles-of-MEA-mandarins/articleshow/8138544.cms>)

Indian vice president leaves for Bangladesh

PTI, May 5, 2011.

Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari on Thursday [5 May] left for a two-day state visit to Bangladesh, where he will represent India during the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in Bangladesh capital, Dhaka. Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Preneet Kaur and two Members of Parliament - O.P. Mathur of BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and Moinul Hassan of CPI (M) [Communist Party of India (Marxists)] - are accompanying the vice president.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

Bangladesh says not to allow land to be used for terrorism against India

PTI, May 7, 2011.

Expressing its commitment to fight the scourge of terrorism, Bangladesh on Saturday [7 May] assured India that its territory will not be allowed to be used by elements working against the interests of any country. Addressing a programme to commemorate the 150th year of Rabindranath Tagore's [renowned poet] birth anniversary here, Planning Minister of Bangladesh A K Khandekar said his countrymen cannot forget India's support to their freedom struggle.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

Bangladesh to allow India access to detained northeast state militant

The Telegraph, May 11, 2011.

The Sheikh Hasina government is ready to give access to someone from Assam [northeastern Indian state] to meet Anup Chetia, the ULFA [United Liberation Front of Assam, separatist militant group] leader in "protective custody" in a Bangladeshi jail. Following the signal from Dhaka, at least one leader from among the eight engaged in peace efforts with the Centre [federal government] will visit Dhaka, a home ministry source said. "There would have to be a passport and visa arranged," the source said. The purpose is to try and include Chetia, a member of ULFA's permanent standing council, in the talks.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

Top Bangladesh court declares 1982-86 military rule illegal

The Daily Star, May 16, 2011.

The Supreme Court [SC] yesterday declared the military rule of H.M. Ershad illegal in a verdict that also said the actions taken by his regime will remain effective until their fate is decided by parliament. A six-member SC bench, headed by Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque, upheld a High Court [HC] judgment knocking off the 7th amendment to the constitution that validated Ershad's illegal military regime. Ershad, an army chief-turned-president, seized power in a military coup on 24 March, 1982 ousting the elected government of President Justice Abdus Sattar.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global Newslines)

Chidambaram lays foundation of ICP in Tripura

IBN Live, May 17, 2011.

Union Home Minister P Chidambaram today said the department of Border Management has finalised the detailed project reports for 13 Integrated Check Posts to be set up along India's border with Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Myanmar. The construction of ICPs at Attari on the Indo-Pakistan border and in Raxaul and Jogabani on the Indo-Nepal border have already started, he said while laying the foundation of the Rs 73.50-crore Agartala Integrated Check Post here to be completed within 14 months. "The ICPs are envisaged to overcome infrastructural bottlenecks at various entry and exit points on land borders of the country. Trade must multiply several folds between the two countries. We must encourage more imports from Bangladesh to India," he said.

(Source: <http://ibnlive.in.com/generalnewsfeed/news/chidambaram-lays-foundation-of-icp-in-tripura/688180.html>)

Talks with Ulfa to resume: PC

Hindustan Times, May 17, 2011.

Home minister P Chidambaram on Wednesday said Ulfa leaders had expressed willingness to resume peace talks and they have been advised to prepare a document based on which dialogue with the government would take place soon. "Ulfa leaders met Assam chief minister, Tarun Gogoi and Prime Minister and expressed willingness to resume peace talks. We advised them to prepare a document on the basis of which talks would start soon to reach an honourable solution to the problem," Chidambaram told reporters in Agartala. Asked if 'commander-in-chief' of Ulfa, Paresh Barua would join the talks, Chidambaram said, "He is not in India. We will start talks with Mr Rajkhowa and his friends. Paresh Barua should come back to India for the talks."

(Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Talks-with-Ulfa-to-resume-PC/Article1-698722.aspx>)

Bangladesh envisions regional power connectivity to ease electric crisis

All Headline News, May 18, 2011.

Bangladesh has undertaken an ambitious plan to augment the energy-starved nation by importing 4,500 megawatts of electricity by 2030, subject to setting up an interconnected regional power grid. Experts, however, describe the mega-plan as unrealistic and impractical. They said the ambitious plan needs huge investment for cross-border electricity trade through difficult areas for construction and transmission of power.

(Source: <http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/90048784?Bangladesh%20envision%20regional%20power%20connectivity%20to%20ease%20electric%20crisis>)

Dhaka, Thimphu to share airports

Daily Star, May 19, 2011.

Bangladesh and Bhutan signed an air operation agreement yesterday allowing each other to use all their airports. As per an earlier agreement, Bhutan can use only Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka and Bangladesh can use Paro Airport, the only international airport of the land-locked country. Officials at the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism said currently Bhutan's national carrier DRUK Air is operating several flights a week between Dhaka and Bhutan via Bangkok but Bangladesh is not operating any flight. They also said under the new agreement both the countries are allowed to operate seven flights a week. Flights can also be operated to more overseas destinations from the countries.

(Source: <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=186325>)

Core body identifies factors to determine transit benefits

Daily Star, May 20, 2011.

The Core Committee on Transit has identified a number of factors – including internal and external costs of Bangladesh for building infrastructure – that will act as the determining issues about assessment of the country's actual benefits accruing out of possible transit arrangements between Bangladesh-India-Nepal and Bhutan through fixing transit traffic and other fees. The committee, headed by Bangladesh Tariff Commission (BTC) Chairman Mojibur Rahman, was asked by Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on April 18 to prepare a report on the country's prospective benefits under transit agreements with the three countries. It submitted its report to PMO last week. Earlier, the Committee, in its report, submitted to the government in mid-April said the country's infrastructure will need an aggregate investment of about Tk 500 billion (equivalent to \$7.11 billion) for its facelift to cope up with the demand for additional traffic load under a transit regime with the three neighbouring countries.

(Source: http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=136294&date=2011-05-20)

India okays fund for Akhaura rail link

Daily Star, May 23, 2011.

India has approved Rs 251 crore (approximately Tk 408 crore) for the construction of a 14 km railway track to connect India's Agartala with Akhaura of Bangladesh. India's union railway ministry approved the budget, country's leading news agency PTI reported on Saturday. During Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India last year, Delhi agreed to construct the Akhaura-Agartala railway at its own cost, foreign ministry officials in Dhaka told The Daily Star yesterday. "The Akhaura-Agartala railway link project is one of the commitments given by India to Bangladesh, which is also mentioned in the joint communiqué issued during prime minister's visit," said a foreign ministry official requesting anonymity.

(Source: <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=186867>)

Bangladesh to get 60,000 hectares for farming in Uganda

Daily Star, May 23, 2011.

Uganda is interested to allocate up to 60,000 hectares of land to Bang-ladeshi entrepreneurs for commercial farming in the east African country, its Honorary Consul to Bangladesh said yesterday. "The government of Uganda has shown interest to allocate more land for cultivation to Bangladeshi entrepreneurs. If it is feasible and receives attractive proposal it will provide more," said Abul Hossain, the honorary consul. "Uganda will provide the land for free. It will however take a percentage of the produce," he said at a press conference at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka. Nitol-Niloy Group, which led the delegation to the African country last month, organised the press meet to announce its plan to invest \$12.5 million to grow rice on 10,000 hectares of land in Uganda in a bid to support Bangladesh's effort to ensure food sufficiency for its growing population.

(Source: <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=186836>)

Militants of Bangladesh using weapons of ULFA

Times of Assam, May 25, 2011.

Bangladesh is facing now the illegal arms problem of united liberation front of Assam (ULFA). Most of the militant leaders of ULFA have deported to India but they have left their arms in Bangladesh. It is a large number of arms. ULFA gathered a large number of illegal arms in Bangladesh. Ten Lorries of illegal arms were caught by police in Chittagong port of Bangladesh. That illegal arms case is an on going trial in the court of Bangladesh. Intelligence branches of Bangladesh are investigating it. They have found evidence already that, Paresh Barua, the chief of army of ULFA was present in the Chittagong port to unload the arms. A group of leaders of the then Islamic militant government of Bangladesh also helped to bring and unload the arms. Bangladesh has already arrested a group of Islamic militant leaders on this case.

(Source: <http://www.timesofassam.com/headlines/militants-of-bangladesh-using-weapons-of-ulfa>)

BNP wants good ties with India

Daily Star, May 25, 2011.

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, now in USA, has said that her party BNP wants good relations with India on the basis of mutual benefits. She made the remarks replying to a question on how BNP considers Bangladesh's relation with neighbouring India at the Atlantic Council of USA in Pennsylvania on Tuesday afternoon. BNP Vice-chairman Shamser Mobin Chowdhury, a member of her entourage, told UNB over phone that Khaleda delivered a statement on democracy, governance and economic development of Bangladesh at the council. The former prime minister said that the unresolved issues between Dhaka and New Delhi will have to be resolved in a win-win situation respecting each other's independence and sovereignty. Khaleda said the outstanding issues will have to be worked out through discussions. If India wants durable solutions to the long running problems, they should discuss the issues with all the political parties of Bangladesh, she said.

(Source: <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=187251>)

Bhutan

Budget should reflect Digital Bangladesh vision

Daily Star, May 27, 2011.

Speakers at a roundtable observed that the national budget for fiscal 2011-12 should focus on the vision of a Digital Bangladesh or it will remain just a slogan. Bangladesh ICT Journalist Forum (BIJF) organised the roundtable styled 'Budget 2011-2012: Towards a Digital Bangladesh' as the national budget will be tabled in parliament on June 9. Experts at the event said the government vowed to establish a Digital Bangladesh by 2021 in its election manifesto in 2009. However, the last two budgets did not have much reflection of that. Speakers observed that if it does not get proper importance in this year's budget, the government will not have much time left to achieve the vision, as it will have to think about the next election before placing the 4th and 5th national budgets.

(Source: <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=187358>)

Nitish Kumar wants share in electricity from Bhutan

DNA India, May 2, 2011.

Ahead of his Bhutan trip, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar today demanded that the Centre sanction major chunk of the power being availed by it from Bhutan to the state. Kumar said he would reach Bhutan on a three day-tour on May 4 at the invitation of the Bhutan king and prime minister. Though the visit to Bhutan would have nothing to do with the issue, the Centre should consider the state's demand, Kumar told reporters on the sidelines of his Janata Darbar programme here.

(Source: http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_nitish-kumar-wants-share-in-electricity-from-bhutan_1538607)

Bhutan Army seeks rescue-mission training from Indian mountaineering institute

The Telegraph, May 5, 2011.

The Royal Bhutan Army has requested the Darjeeling-based Himalayan Mountaineering Institute [HMI] to train its personnel in search and rescue missions during landslides and earthquakes in high altitude areas. The request was sent by the Bhutanese government through India's Union [federal] home ministry. "We have received the request and have accordingly, charted a special course for the Royal Bhutan Army. In principle, both the countries have agreed to train the personnel at the HMI but we are still discussing the number of personnel to be trained," Col Neeraj Rana, the principal of the HMI, said.

(Source: BBC News Monitoring Online)

Tanking up in anticipation

Kuensel, May 16, 2011.

Anticipating a hike in the petrol price after Indian media reported its increase by Rs 5 since yesterday, a convoy of vehicles in Thimphu queued at the city's various fuel depots to fill up their tanks. It is probably the highest petrol price rise so far. The price of petrol in the country, which will be decided today, trade officials said,

would be less than that of India. "This is because of the tax difference," chief trade officer Dophu Tshering said. Unlike in India, where they announce the hike and regulate it, he said they would have to work on the price after receiving the intimation and invoice from Bharat Petroleum limited and Indian Oil limited.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=19405>)

United in the pursuit of justice

The Hindu, May 19, 2011.

From May 24 to 26, senior police officers, prosecutors and, for the first time, judges from the eight SAARC members will meet in Thimphu, Bhutan, to discuss common challenges and strategies. They will consider specific issues that arise in the context of terrorism-related cases, such as interviewing suspects, interrogation techniques, the challenges of using classified evidence in prosecutions, and the effective implementation of laws aimed at countering terrorism and transnational crime. The workshop in Bhutan is the fourth in a series of events organised by CTED and the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation with the support of SAARC and host countries in South Asia. Like its predecessors in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, this month's event will seek to identify effective approaches, specific to the region and grounded in respect for human rights and the rule of law.

(Source: <http://www.hindu.com/2011/05/19/stories/2011051951161100.htm>)

Quake could cause Himalayan glacial lakes to inundate populated areas

Daily India, May 17, 2011.

Earthquakes could lead glacial lakes in the Himalayas to cause serious hazards to population centres, scientists have said. The BBC quoted them as saying that past records indicate the region could experience a large quake in the future. According to reports, many glacial lakes are said to be growing, and some of them are alarmingly, because of melting glaciers. Some are at risk of rupturing, could flood downstream areas, they said. "Such a disaster is very much possible, more so, when we are expecting a big earthquake in the region now. If the acceleration is very high in the epicentre of the earthquake, everything will be in the air as things will not be stable. So, naturally the liquids like waters in glacial lakes will burst out," Sushil Kumar, a geophysicist with the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology in India, said.

(Source: <http://www.dailyindia.com/show/440228.php>)

Hope to work together: Bhutan minister

Bangladesh News, May 23, 2011.

Offering to work together to build 'Digital Bangladesh', Bhutan's minister for information and communication Lyonpo Nandalal Rai has left Dhaka for home.

"Bhutan is an old friend of Bangladesh. It was the first country to declare Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971," Nandalal told a discussion at Burimari

land port prior to his departure on Friday. "We've visited Syedpur Airport and Lalmonirhat from an urge to work together," he added.

(Source: <http://www.bdnews24.com/details.php?id=196282&cid=2>)

Bhutan and Nepal share a wish list of products to be traded free of tax

Business Bhutan, May 28, 2011.

Progressing toward the establishment of a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), trade delegations from Bhutan and Nepal, met in Thimphu, this week, to exchange the preliminary list of goods that will be allowed to cross borders at 'zero percent' tax. The Bhutanese delegation presented a list of about 107 goods while the Nepali delegation presented about 300 goods for exemption on tax. The list from the Bhutanese side mainly consisted of agriculture produce, intermediary products, cements and alcohol while Nepal submitted a mix of iron products, electricity transmission pole, GI pipes, electricity transformer, fruits, vegetables, tea, noodles, chocolates, soaps, and handicrafts.

(Source: <http://www.businessbhutan.bt/?p=6187>)

Maldives

Maldivians protest over soaring commodity prices - Day 3

Haveeru, May 2, 2011.

Some members of the parliament have joined the protest after the parliament sitting held tonight to debate on the anti-crime bill. Police have issued a second warning to disperse the crowd gathered at the Youth Square. Protestors, however, vowed to continue the protest. Maldivians protest over soaring commodity prices Police have issued the warning to crackdown on the protestors who are gathered at the junction between Majeedee Magu and Chaandhane Magu. Ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) supporters, meanwhile, have been told by senior officials of the party that they can go to Youth Square to bring an end to the protest. However, MDP supporters have not yet decided on the matter. The opposition protestors are waiting for the MPs, who are currently attending a parliament sitting, to join the protest after the sitting.

(Source: <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/36173>)

US encourages Maldivian government and opposition to work together

Haveeru, May 2, 2011.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Robert O. Blake, who is visiting the Maldives, today encouraged the Maldivian government and the opposition to work together and come to a bipartisan agreement in overcoming the several challenges faced by the Maldives. Speaking to local media at the American Centre in the capital Male, Blake said the US understands the challenges faced by the people and the authorities as the Maldives' young democracy continues to gain strength. "As in many new democracies, the transition to a functioning system of checks and balances between the branches of the government presents challenges. But I was

Nepal

pleased that President Nasheed reaffirmed in our meeting his very strong commitment to freedom of assembly, in particular," he said.

(Source: http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/36172/US_encourages_Maldivian_government_and_opposition_to_work_together)

Home ministry portfolio to Maoist: Leader Chand

The Himalayan Times, May 2, 2011.

Standing Committee member of the Unified CPN-Maoist Netra Bikram Chand has said that the Home Ministry portfolio has been allotted to the Maoist party. Inaugurating the advisors memorial nationwide open chess championship organized by the Nepal Republican Sports Federation here today, leader Chand said that the UCPN-Maoist will send leaders to represent the party in the government in two days taking seven ministries including the home portfolio. He said it is not true that there has been delay in choosing leaders representing the party in the government because of the dispute over the ministry portfolios.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Home+ministry+portfolio+to+Maoist%3A+Leader+Chand&NewsID=286370>)

Maoists sound out NC on peace, statute, CA

My Republica, May 3, 2011.

With the constitution drafting deadline coming closer by the day, the UCPN (Maoist) has begun talks with the main opposition Nepali Congress (NC) on the peace process, constitution drafting, power-sharing and the extension of the CA term.

The top Maoist brass led by Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal held talks with the NC late Monday evening and sought the latter's cooperation in finalizing the first integrated draft of the constitution before May 28 – the CA deadline – and reaching consensus on the modality for integration and rehabilitation of the party's combatants at the earliest. "We informed the NC about our party's latest decision to put in best efforts to conclude the peace process and constitution drafting. They said they knew about the decision from the papers and they are very positive about our decision," Maoist Vice-chairman Narayankaji Shrestha said. The NC and the Maoists then agreed to hold informal talks at the top level before striking an agreement on the contentious issues.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=30878)

EU missions urge Nepal to "redouble" efforts to draft new constitution

Nepal News, May 3, 2011.

Kathmandu-based European Union (EU) missions along with Switzerland and Norway have urged political parties to redouble their efforts to reach an agreement on the modalities of army integration and prepare the draft of the new constitution by 28 May. "With the deadline for agreeing the draft of a new Constitution fast approaching, we call upon all political parties to redouble their efforts and show

the required flexibility to bring to a rapid conclusion the many years of discussion by agreeing modalities for the integration and rehabilitation of the former PLA [People's Liberation Army] combatants, and by completing before 28 May 2011 the drafting of a democratic, inclusive constitution through the constituent assembly," a joint statement issued by the EU missions (Denmark, EU Delegation, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK), Norway and Switzerland said.

(Source: BBC New Monitoring Online.)

President Dr. Yadav dispels takeover rumours

The Himalayan Times, May 16, 2011.

Amid rumours that there will be the President's rule in the country after May 28, President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav today ruled out the possibility of this. Talking to reporters at Sapahi here today, President Dr. Yadav said since the Interim Constitution has no provision regarding President's rule, there won't be such in the country.

On extension of the Constituent Assembly's tenure, he said whether or not to expand the constitution-making body's term should be sorted out through political consensus.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=President+Dr.+Yadav+dispels+takeover+rumours&NewsID=288138&a=3>)

Nepal opposition parties lay down conditions for constitution drafting process

Nepal News, May 16, 2011.

Opposition parties led by main opposition Nepali Congress (NC) submitted a seven-point memorandum on concluding peace and constitution drafting process to Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal Monday [16 May]. Opposition parties including NC, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) and CPN (ML) [Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist)] submitted the memorandum with conditions for support for the extension of CA [Constituent Assembly, body set up to draft new constitution] term to PM Khanal after a meeting at NC headquarters. The conditions include preparing a clear action plan with number and modality for integration of Maoist combatants to security forces, reducing the number of cantonments to seven from existing 28 and severing completely the combatants' access to arms.

(Source: BBC Monitoring News Line)

NC twisting Nepal Maoist arms, unacceptable: Narayankaji

The Telegraph Nepal, May 19, 2011.

The Nepali Congress has informally asked the Maoists to submit their modality for integration within May 24, 2011. According to the NC the Maoists should accept

integration in the security organs on individual basis, forward the number of PLA to undergo integration, regroup PLA into two groups (Integration and Rehabilitation separately) and present its modality of integration within the stated deadline. If the NC demands are met with it will support the CA tenure extension bill forwarded by the government.

(Source: <http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2011-05-19/nc-twisting-nepal-maoist-arms-unacceptable:-narayankaji.html>)

GMR's hydropower project office in Nepal burnt down

Sify News, May 22, 2011.

Within a month of Indian External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna visiting Nepal and seeking the security of Indian investments and Indian employees in the troubled republic, a mob Sunday broke into the site office of Indian infrastructure major GMR in a remote district, attacked the people inside and torched the office. The attack and arson occurred in the GMR site office in remote Dailekh district in western Nepal.

(Source: <http://www.sify.com/news/gmr-s-hydropower-project-office-in-nepal-burnt-down-news-international-lfwuOhhbaag.html>)

Bilateral Trade Talks with Bhutan on Tuesday

Asian Tribune, May, 23, 2011.

Nepal and Bhutan are holding bilateral trade talks in Bhutanese capital city Thimpu on Tuesday in order to promote bilateral trade between the two landlocked countries in South Asia. The two-day joint-secretary level talk is also aimed at sharing experiences and best practices in hydropower generation and tourism promotion. Ministry of Commerce and Supplies has held consultations with various stakeholders including traders and exporters to set the agenda during the talks. Nepal expects to explore the possibility of expanding its exports to Bhutan. Bhutan has emerged as one of the potential export destinations for Nepal as it presently enjoys comfortable trade surplus with Druk kingdom. While Nepal exports industrial products, such as electricity transformers, noodles and handicrafts to Bhutan it imports fruits, tomatoes and other agro-based products from there.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/05/22/bilateral-trade-talks-bhutan-tuesday>)

Apex court reviewing ruling on CA extension

Himalayan Times, May 23, 2011.

The Supreme Court today began hearing on review of its own verdict upholding one year extension of the Constituent Assembly tenure through the eighth amendment of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007. A five-member special bench led by Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi began reviewing the CA extension. Responding to a writ filed by Hindu activist Bharat Jangum, the bench set out to review its verdict issued on November 4, 2010 that had upheld the extension of CA tenure. Pleading on behalf of the petitioner, former attorney general and senior advocate

Pawan Kumar Ojha today called upon the apex court to correct its mistake and said the CA tenure extension was unconstitutional.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Apex+court+reviewing+++ruling+on+CA+extension+&NewsID=288901>)

Nepal govt vows to take action GMR office attack incident

Zee News, May 25, 2011.

Nepalese government on Wednesday assured that action will be taken against the perpetrators who vandalised the office of Indian joint venture firm GMR, severely beating its staff and setting ablaze three buildings in western Nepal's Dailekh district.

Energy Minister Gokarna Bista has expressed commitment to take action against those who were involved in the arsoning of the GMR Energy's office in Dailekh district recently. A group of 60 Maoist cadres on May 22 attacked the offices of GMR Energy in Dailekh, 700 km west of Kathmandu, and overpowered the security guards before setting the office buildings on fire, according to a senior GMR official.

(Source: <http://www.zeenews.com/news708692.html>)

CA tenure should be extended: Bhattarai

Himalayan Times, May 27, 2011.

UCPN-Maoist Vice-chairman Dr. Baburam Bhattarai stressed on the need for protecting the achievements that were received from different movement in the past 60 years extending Constituent Assembly (CA) tenure. Speaking at a function organised on the Ninth Krishna Sen 'Ichchuk' Memorial Day by Nepal Revolutionary Journalists' Association in the Capital on Friday, he said CA is the greatest achievement received in the past 60 years that it should be saved at any cost. Vice-chairman Bhattarai said there is no alternative to extend CA term for next six months that the parties should compromise their stance and be ready for political consensus.

(Source: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=CA+tenure+should+be+extended%3A+Bhattarai+&NewsID=289509&a=3>)

Nepal Constituent Assembly term extended by three months

Nepal News, May 29, 2011.

The Constituent Assembly (CA) term has been extended by another three months. The Legislature Parliament passed the ninth amendment to the interim constitution Sunday morning [29 May] to extend the CA term. The parliament has changed the phrase "the term of CA will be three years from the date of its first meeting" mentioned in Article 64 of the interim constitution to "the term of CA will be three years and three months from the date of its first meeting." The CA term was extended after a five-point agreement among largest three political parties in the CA - Unified CPN [Communist Party of Nepal] (Maoist), Nepali Congress (NC) and UML [Unified Marxist Leninist]. Although United Democratic Madhesi Front

Pakistan

had also initially given consent to the CA term extension, it later stayed neutral at the time of voting saying the agreement was still not enough to address the cause of the Madhes [southern plains].

(Source: BBC Monitoring News Line)

PPP, PML-Q strike power-sharing deal

Daily Times, May 2, 2011.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Q on Sunday night agreed to form a coalition government and cooperate in the next general elections. A meeting was held at the Presidency between the leaders of PPP and PML-Q, which was attended by Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi and Raja Basharat from the PML-Q side, while President Asif Ali Zardari, who is also the PPP co-chairman, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Presidential spokesman Farhatullah Babar represented the PPP side. The two parties agreed to work together and cooperate for strengthening democracy, ensuring electoral reforms, reforms in FATA, creation of new provinces, especially in southern Punjab (Saraiki) and Hazara subject to consultations with the people and approval of stakeholders, including making appropriate amendments to the constitution for this purpose. Babar said the two parties agreed to cooperate in a number of areas of concern to the people, including economic uplift, controlling inflation, issues of power shortage, transparency, accountability and strengthening of the law and order situation in the country. Following the agreement, in principle, the PML-Q agreed to form the coalition government with the PPP in the center, headed by the PPP's prime minister.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\05\02\story_2-5-2011_pg1_1)

Manmohan Singh asks Pakistan to put an end to terrorism from its soil

Asian Tribune, May 3, 2011.

The killing of Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden in Pakistani soil in an US operation has confirmed the India stand that Pakistan has not been sincere in its assurances that it was working hard to end terrorism emanating from its soil. Only the gullible will accept the Pakistan government claim that it was unaware of Osama's presence, not too far from Islamabad. The massive mansion which housed Osama and his family, including his youngest wife, all of whom were apparently killed, was a give away without a phone and internet connection. The US operatives who had spotted the Osama print were waiting for a directive from President Barack Obama. And when the "Kill him" President's order was given, it did not take long to attack the building and kill Osama. To prevent any glorification of the slain terrorist leader who had plotted the 26/11 US attacks, Osama was quickly buried at sea, US officials confirmed. Meanwhile, describing Osama bin Laden's killing as a "significant step forward", Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday asked the international community and Pakistan in particular to work comprehensively to end the activities of all terror groups.

(Source: <http://asiantribune.com/news/2011/05/02/manmohan-singh-asks-pakistan-put-end-terrorism-its-soil-0>)

President Zardari hails Russian firms' wish to develop Pakistani energy sector

Associated Press of Pakistan, May 15, 2011.

Leading Russian companies Gazprom, Zarubezhneftegaz and Inter Raoues are keen to develop Pakistan's energy sector and will contribute to the building of power-generating facilities and developing gas fields in Pakistan. This assurance was given to President Asif Ali Zardari during his first three-day state visit to Russia (11-13 May) during which the leadership of both the countries held in-depth discussions on bilateral, regional and international issues. The Russian business community showed interest in working together with the Pakistani government and businesses in a number of commercial, infrastructure and banking projects. The Russian side reaffirmed the willingness of Russian companies to cooperate with Pakistan. State-owned enterprise Tyazhpromeexport is ready to take part in the modernization of Pakistan Steel Mills in Karachi to increase its production. President Zardari, who was the first Pakistani president to visit Russia since 1974, supported Russia's offer to participate in the projects and underscored the need for their early realization.

(Source: **BBC Monitoring Global News**)

Kerry presents list of "specific demands" to Pakistan

Dawn, May 16, 2011.

US Sen. John Kerry gave Pakistan's army chief a list of "specific demands" relating to American suspicions about Pakistan's harboring of militants ahead of meetings Monday that could shape a partnership dangerously strained by the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, a Pakistani official said. US officials have increased pressure on Pakistan since the May 2 American raid in Abbottabad – a northwest Pakistan garrison town where bin Laden was killed by US Navy SEALs. But they also seem to be trying to balance their anger, aware of the risk of wholly severing ties with the nuclear-armed country. Pakistan's cooperation is considered vital to ending the war in Afghanistan.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/16/kerry-presents-list-of-specific-demands-to-pakistan.html>)

Kerry arrives in Pakistan for meetings over bin Laden that could sway future aid prospects

Washington Post, May 16, 2011.

U.S. Sen. John F. Kerry arrived here late Sunday to discuss the killing of Osama bin Laden with Pakistani leaders, in meetings that could influence whether the United States continues to provide billions of dollars in aid to an ally that many in Washington believe harbors Islamist militants. Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the most senior U.S. official to visit Pakistan since bin Laden's death on May 2, comes as the two nations' relationship hovers at one of its worst-ever points. He is expected to bluntly lay out the rising stakes in

Washington, where some members of Congress are calling for the severance of aid to Pakistan.

(Source: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/sen-john-kerry-arrives-in-pakistan-for-meetings-that-could-sway-future-us-aid-prospects/2011/05/16/AFJJIZ4G_story.html?hpid=z3)

China defends Pakistan

Hindustan Times, May 18, 2011.

China made its most forceful assurance yet of 'unswerving' support to Pakistan as Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani arrived on a four-day visit. Pakistan has pinned hopes on this visit to secure greater aid and strategic backing from Beijing to counter sinking ties with the US and India. China is the only power that has rushed to Pakistan's rescue and refused to speculate on Laden's potential support network in Islamabad. As Gilani landed in Shanghai on Tuesday, the Chinese foreign ministry reminded the world of Pakistan's 'great sacrifices' as a 'victim' of terrorism and asked nations to rally in its support. "The Chinese government will unswervingly continue to support Pakistan's efforts to fight terrorism," said foreign ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu. "We are willing to work together along with Pakistani side to create a bright future for that relationship."

(Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/China-defends-Pakistan/Article1-698854.aspx>)

Nawaz Sharif's India remark divides Pakistan

India Today, May 19, 2011.

Former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif's remarks on the country's relations with India and the US and the accountability of the military and intelligence agencies has sparked diverse reactions in Pakistan, ranging from unqualified praise to strong criticism. At a press conference in Karachi on Monday, Sharif said: "Pakistan must stop treating India as its biggest enemy." He said a revision of Islamabad's policies towards New Delhi was imperative "if we want to go forward and progress". He also called for placing the accounts of the military and intelligence agencies before Parliament. Earlier on May 14, Sharif had stressed that formulating policies should be the prerogative of the elected government instead of the military and intelligence agencies.

(Source: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/story/nawaz-sharifs-india-remark-divides-pakistan/1/138607.html>)

'Armed gangs outnumber police in Karachi'

Dawn, May 23, 2011.

"The police are only one of several armed groups and probably not the most numerous or best equipped," according to a secret assessment of the 'The Gangs of Karachi' by then US consul general Stephen Fakan in April 2009. The assessment focuses on the Pakistan People's Party, Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Awami National Party, Muhajir Qaumi Movement (H), Sunni Tehreek and "Pashtun terrorists", besides some armed gangs operating in Lyari and other parts of this

megapolis. It states that “the PPP’s decision to include MQM in coalition governments in Sindh and at the centre has helped preclude a return to the PPP-MQM violence of the 1990s. But the potential for MQM-ANP conflict is growing as Pashtuns challenge Muhajir political dominance and vie for control of key economic interests, such as the lucrative trucking industry.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/23/secret-us-cables-accessed-by-dawn-through-wikileaks-armed-gangs-outnumber-police-in-karachi.html>)

Militants storm PNS Mehran base in Karachi, five dead

Dawn, May 23, 2011.

Gunmen armed with rockets and explosives stormed a major Pakistani naval air base, triggering gunbattles that killed five military personnel, three weeks after the US killing of Osama bin Laden. Around 10 people were wounded and towering flames rose over PNS Mehran in the centre of Karachi, Pakistan’s largest city, where the military and government confirmed that the base was under “terrorist attack”. An AFP reporter saw swarms of soldiers and navy commando reinforcements pile into the base as smoke rose into the night sky. Over a period of several hours, an AFP photographer heard nine blasts and periodic bursts of gunfire. A spokesman for the Pakistan Navy said fighting was still continuing more than five hours after the attack began at around 10:45 pm (1745 GMT) on Sunday.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/23/loud-explosion-heard-near-paf-museum.html>)

Bashir to hand over Gilani’s message to Karzai

Dawn, May 23, 2011.

Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir will deliver a ‘special message’ from Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani to Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Monday. The message from Mr Gilani follows his meetings with Chinese leaders in which Pakistan and China agreed to coordinate efforts on the situation in Afghanistan. A close aide of the prime minister said that through his message Mr Gilani intended to take Mr Karzai on board about his discussions with Chinese leaders on Afghanistan. Diplomatic sources suggest that Prime Minister Gilani has lately been pursuing a plan to forge a regional alliance between Pakistan, Afghanistan and China. Though this idea has been discussed with Afghan and Chinese leaders in the past, it is said that Islamabad may strive to fast-track it after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit to Kabul during which India and Afghanistan announced a strategic partnership. The spokesperson for the Foreign Office wasn’t available for comments.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/23/bashir-to-hand-over-gilanis-message-to-karzai.html>)

India saddened by Karachi incident

The Dawn, May 24, 2011.

India on Monday expressed sorrow over the loss of lives in the terror attack in Karachi and said vigil had to be stepped up in the country. Home

Minister P. Chidambaram, who was asked by reporters to comment on the attack on Pakistan's naval airbase, said: "I have described our neighbourhood as a troubled neighbourhood. This incident has once again pointed to that conclusion." In advisory to upgrade security has been issued to all Indian states. Mr Chidambaram said India was "not happy" about the incident that took place in Karachi. "In fact, we are sad that lives are lost. But that is today a troubled state." Noting that any incident of terrorism in the region certainly must be viewed gravely, he said: "We must increase our vigil. Therefore we remain alert and we have alerted the states based on whatever intelligence we have. On unconfirmed reports regarding Taliban leader Mullah Omar's death in Pakistan, Mr Chidambaram said: "Afghan authorities have disclosed that he was killed but there are contradictory versions. We will have to wait and see whether that report is correct."

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/24/india-saddened-by-karachi-incident.html>)

Terror Trial Witness Ties Pakistan to 2008 Attacks

New York Times, May 24, 2011.

The government's leading witness in a high-profile terrorism trial told jurors here Monday that the group behind the 2008 attack on Mumbai, India, had ties to Pakistan's intelligence service. In testimony that prosecutors said offered a "rare look" inside a major terrorist plot, David C. Headley said he had trained with the Islamist militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba between 2002 and 2005 in preparation for scouting locations to attack in India. In 2006, Mr. Headley said, he met a member of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency who offered to provide financial support for that surveillance.

(Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/24/world/asia/24headley.html?_r=1&hp)

NO peace in region until resolution of Kashmir issue: PM

Daily Times, May 24, 2011.

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani said on Monday that regional peace cannot be guaranteed until the resolution of Kashmir issue, urging the world's peace loving nations to come forward to resolve the issue that has jeopardised the peace efforts in the region. "Unless this core issue is resolved, the dream of peace and harmony in the region cannot come true," said the prime minister after inaugurating a two-day national conference on Kashmir, organised by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir University. The premier highlighted the need for acknowledging Kashmiris' rights to self-determination in accordance with the United Nations resolutions. He said that no significant development could take place in South Asia unless the resolution of this core issue.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\05\24\story_24-5-2011_pg7_1)

US cutting back troops in Pakistan: Pentagon

Dawn, May 25, 2011.

The US military said Wednesday it plans to scale back the number of American troops in Pakistan after Islamabad made a formal request, amid tensions over a

US raid against Osama bin Laden."We were recently (within past 2 weeks) notified in writing that the government of Pakistan wished for the US to reduce its footprint in Pakistan. Accordingly, we have begun those reductions," spokesman Colonel Dave Lapan said in an email to reporters. There are more than 200 US military personnel in Pakistan serving mostly as trainers as part of a long-running effort to counter AlQaeda and religious militants. But the uneasy relationship between Pakistan and the United States has come under severe strain following a unilateral raid by US commandos that killed bin Laden on May 2 in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad, home to a military academy.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/26/us-cutting-back-troops-in-pakistan-pentagon.html>)

Hillary in Pakistan to ask 'tough questions'

Dawn, May 27, 2011.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton flew into Pakistan on Friday with "tough questions" for the country's leadership nearly a month after US commandos killed Osama bin Laden near Islamabad. The US diplomat met Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, then headed into talks with army chief Ashfaq Kayani and the chief of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Ahmad Shuja Pasha, officials said. Clinton is being accompanied in the meetings by chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen and is expected to demand more cooperation from Pakistan in the fight against al Qaeda and Taliban militants.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/27/hillary-in-pakistan-to-ask-tough-questions.html>)

Pakistan paper highlights role of insiders in attacks on defence installations

Ausaf, May 27, 2011.

Analysts, former military and intelligence officials are of the opinion that attacks [like the one that occurred at Mehran Base] are impossible without help from inside. Experts and former military officials say the attack could not have been carried out without help from inside. Several incidents took place in the past, in which former military officers and personnel were found involved. Personnel of technical department of Pakistan Air Force [PAF] were involved in an attack on Pervez Musharraf, and Supreme Court has recently rejected appeals of the accused, after which the Taleban issued threats to Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. The attack on Tarbela Ghazi mess of the commandos, who had taken part in Red Mosque operation, was also carried out with the assistance of a milkman supplying milk there. The 2009 attack on GHQ [military general headquarters in Rawalpindi] was led by [name omitted], who had served in the [name of department omitted] of Army Medical Corps and he used to frequently visit GHQ.

(Source: BBC News Monitoring Online)

India calls Pakistan 'fragile' state in talks with US

Dawn, May 27, 2011.

India sounded the alarm on Friday that Pakistan had become a "fragile" state with militant groups nurtured as "an instrument of state policy" uniting in their battle against the government. Home Minister P. Chidambaram issued the warning at the start of talks with US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, who is on a four-day trip to India to strengthen anti-terror information-sharing between the countries. New Delhi has long accused Pakistan of harbouring militant groups, but analysts say it is becoming increasingly concerned that growing unrest could compromise the safety of the country's growing nuclear arsenal.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/27/us-india-seek-to-step-up-security-cooperation.html>)

Clinton's visit to Pakistan helped remove "misconceptions" - Foreign Office

Associated Press Pakistan, May 28, 2011.

Pakistan said on Saturday [28 May] that the recent visit of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Admiral Mike Mullen to Pakistan had helped remove misconceptions and misunderstanding between the two countries to a great extent. Foreign Office Spokesperson Tehmina Janjua in her weekly briefing said that during discussions, the leadership of two countries indicated their concerns and now they understood each other's perspective in a better manner. She said that Pakistan and the United States have agreed to continue fight against terrorism, conduct joint operations, share information, ensure return of peace and stability to Afghanistan, and facilitate the Afghan-led process for peace and reconciliation.

(Source: BBC Global News Monitor)

All parties to be consulted over probe into Bin-Ladin raid - Pakistan minister

Associated Press of Pakistan, May 29, 2011.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said on Sunday [29 May] that an independent commission to probe the Abbottabad incident would be set up after consultations with all the political parties and stakeholders. "The leader of the opposition in the National Assembly has proposed some names for the commission but there are also some other signatories of the parliament's resolution. The prime minister has started consultations with them to evolve a consensus on it," she said while addressing a press conference here. Dr Firdous said that the government would own the unanimous resolution regarding Abbottabad incident by setting up the independent commission. "We are trying to find out a suitable person having an international repute, unblemished past and is acceptable to all the parties and people to head the commission," she added.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global News)

Sri Lanka

Plan for operation in N. Waziristan finalised: Mullen

Dawn, May 31, 2011.

The US military chief, Admiral Mike Mullen, said on Monday that the Pakistani government would launch a major offensive on militants in North Waziristan. "It's a very important fight and a very important operation," the outgoing chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff told a television network. In several interviews to US television channels, Admiral Mullen said part of his job as chairman had been to try and "close the trust gap" between the United States and Pakistan, which had built up over many years. Mr Mullen said he visited Pakistan last week with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to "show the strength in terms of our commitment" because "we're going through a difficult patch right now after the (Osama) bin Laden operation".

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/31/plan-for-operation-in-n-waziristan-finalised-mullen.html>)

Marxist party says appointing a task force with all political parties is the solution to Sri Lanka's current issues

Colombo Page, May 2, 2011.

The Marxist party of Sri Lanka, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) has proposed the implementation of a task force with members from all political parties to steer the country through the fallout from the report by the UN Experts Panel on Sri Lanka. JVP Leader Somawansa Amarasinghe told the party's May Day rally last evening that the task force would address the resettlement process of the war displaced and bring national reconciliation. He observed that there was no need for any Sri Lankan government official to be sent to the electric chair as claimed by the government portraying a false patriotism. Amarasinghe pointed out that a multi-party task force is the way out of the current situation and the government therefore has a solution for the issue.

(Source: http://www.colombopage.com/archive_11/May02_1304319870JR.php)

Robert O' Blake is in Colombo: Planning to meet government officials

Asian Tribune, May 3, 2011.

United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs and former Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives arrived in the island last evening. He is expected to meet with government officials, civil society representatives, and political leaders during his four day stay in the country, the US embassy said. Robert O' Blake is also expected to discuss some of Sri Lanka's human rights issues with External Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris and to visit USAID-supported programmes in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.

(Source: <http://asiantribune.com/news/2011/05/02/robert-o-blake-colombo-planning-meet-government-officials>)

Sri Lankan PM says difference between deaths of Bin-Ladin, Tamil Tigers leader

Daily Mirror, May 4, 2011.

Prime Minister D.M Jayaratne asked whether the killing of Usamah Bin-Ladin by US forces in Pakistan was not a violation of international law."How can one country's forces enter another sovereign state to kill a person on an order? We never ordered the killing of Prabhakaran [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's leader]. He died while the war was going on. That's the difference between these two deaths," he said. He made these observations during an event in Pettah [in western Sri Lanka] on Monday [2 May] evening.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global News)

Sri Lanka to hold elections in north soon after resettlement of voters

Daily Mirror, May 10, 2011.

President Mahinda Rajapakse said today that elections to the Northern Provincial Council [councils in northern Si Lankan province] would be held soon after the resettlement and the registration of voters in the province were completed. Speaking to newspaper editors at Temple Trees [official residence of Sri Lankan Prime Minister], he said this in response to a question by an editor who asked why elections to the Northern Provincial Council were being delayed. Replying to a question from another editor on whether devolution of power to the people of the north would not have precluded many of the issues raised in the UNSG's [United Nations Secretary-General] Panel report, the president said that the government did not intend to pander to the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] but hoped to satisfy the aspirations of the people.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global News)

Sri Lanka emphasizes the need to introduce definitions for 'Terrorism' and 'Terrorists' in the U.N. Charter

Asian Tribune, May 16, 2011.

Sri Lanka's Skills Development and Youth Affairs Minister Dullas Alahapperuma has said that in October 24, 1945 the UN was established to protect humanity from war, but after the collapse of the USSR, UN lost its main objective and undertook the task of 'Conflict Management/Conflict Resolution' brought into the world by certain Western and European elements to go into democratic countries and intervene in their internal affairs in the name of protecting human rights. According to this theory, he has said, a conflict should have a win-win solution and there is no way of eradicating terrorism.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/05/16/sri-lanka-emphasizes-need-introduce-definitions-%E2%80%98terrorism%E2%80%99-and-%E2%80%98terrorists%E2%80%99-unchart>)

Lanka parties to protest against Indian interference: Report

Zee News, May 22, 2011.

Two Sri Lankan political parties are planning to protest against India's interference in the internal matters of the country over amending constitution and probing human rights abuses, according to media reports. The pro-government Patriotic National Movement (PNM) and the opposition Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) are to protest what they have alleged Indian interference in Sri Lanka, the 'Sunday Times' said today. The protests are a reaction to last week's joint statement by India and Sri Lanka at the end of the Lankan external affairs minister GL Peiris' visit to New Delhi.

(Source: <http://www.zeenews.com/news708006.html>)

Indian coastguard detains 10 Sri Lankan fishermen

PTI News Agency, May 29, 2011.

The coastguard (Eastern) region has apprehended 10 Sri Lankan fishermen for allegedly fishing in Indian waters and seized two Lankan fishing boats from them. The boats - "Chejana" and "Kulanputha" were seized about 120 km from Kakinada late Saturday [28 May] night, an official release said. Adding that the boats had 5,000 kg of fish onboard altogether, it said the two vessels were being taken to the Kakinada Port for handing over to the police. This is the eighth such apprehension of Sri Lankan fishermen and boats in 2011, the release said. Till date, 17 boats with 84 crew and 18,900 kg of fish have been apprehended, the release added.

(Source: BBC Monitoring Global News)